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ABSTRACT

Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) in North Carolina has developed a multimedia recruitment program using Asymetrix ToolBook software. Combining text, graphics, and pictures, the program provides curriculum and admissions information to prospective students. By taking an interactive multimedia tour, prospective students can become immediately acquainted with programs that interest them. The product can be used in-house, at high schools, mall exhibits, and industry visits. Topics outlined in the program include application procedures, tuition costs, financial aid, placement tests, counseling and advising, and registration day. Curriculum topics include course and program descriptions, job opportunities, and faculty biographies. This program can be used to present information about BRCC's curriculums to advisory committees or local civic organizations using an overhead projector with an LCD projection panel. The program helps create a high-tech image for the institution. Over 200 working hours have been invested in developing the program. While the current focus of the program is on curriculum and admissions, it will be expanded to include a personnel directory and a section explaining various functions of the personnel in the Student Services area. Other possible sections include continuing education, small business center, and industry training partnerships. Format samples, technical specifications, and costs for implementing the program are included. (KP)

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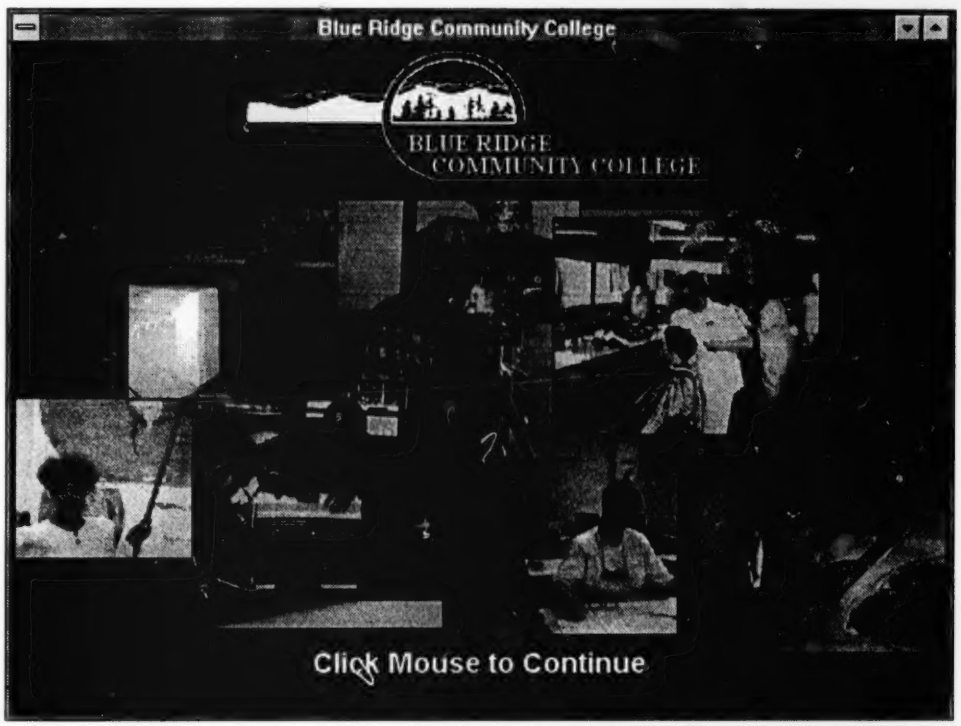
Multimedia Curriculum Presentations

A New Twist on Recruiting



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A presentation at the 1994 National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development International Conference on Teaching Excellence, May 23, 1994.

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Multimedia Curriculum Presentations

A New Twist on Recruiting

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A presentation at the 1994 National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development International Conference on Teaching Excellence, May 23, 1994.

This presentation demonstrates how Blue Ridge Community College is using multimedia technology to assist in the recruiting process. It highlights a project involving a ToolBook presentation developed to introduce prospective students to the various curricula offered by our college. The presentation covers this project from its inception through implementation, including a demonstration of the program we have developed. Attendees of this demonstration see how our college uses multimedia technology in recruiting and formulate ideas on how they may develop similar applications to assist in promoting their institutions.

In the Beginning...

During the summer of 1992, the North Carolina Department of Community Colleges sponsored a multimedia workshop designed for instructors in all curriculum areas at the Institute for Academic Technology located in Research Triangle Park, NC. During this workshop, Terry Robinson was exposed to multimedia computing for the first time as he learned the basics of Asymetrix's ToolBook software package, and began developing some classroom applications using this software.

The Wheels Started Spinning

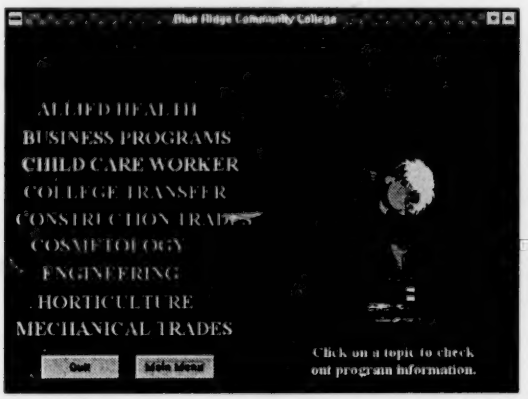
Upon returning to campus, Terry shared his experiences with Marcia Stoneman and showed her some examples of the programs he and others had created during the workshop. Other than just being awed by these new applications, we began realizing the potential power of this software package. By being able to combine text, graphics, pictures, etc., we saw that we could develop an application to assist in presenting the curriculums we offer and other information about our school

to prospective students. With Terry's background in computing and Marcia's knowledge of the recruiting process, a natural partnership evolved allowing us to explore the possibilities of creating a multimedia recruiting package.

Defining the Need

We were seeking a better way to disseminate information to prospective students. Initial contact with prospective students is one of the key factors in the recruiting process. While a campus visit is the ideal way to expose prospective students to the programs and curricula offered by a school, many times the student's interest needs to be kindled. By taking an interactive multimedia tour of the campus, the prospective students can become acquainted with the programs that interest them. The viewbook approach is limited in size, thus addressing each curriculum in detail is cost prohibitive. Video presentations are linear by nature, and lack the flexibility to tailor to the interests of an individual student. By using a hypernavigational approach, a student interested in welding can be served as efficiently as a business student. As the competition for students becomes more fierce, this type of application can create a memorable impression for the student. The technology is now available to virtually take the campus to the student. We wanted a product we could use in-house, at high schools, mall exhibits, industry visits and at other recruiting opportunities.

Not the Catalog!



As we started developing this program, our first approach was to duplicate much of the information that was in our catalog. After designing several screens that duplicated the catalog's format and information, we asked ourselves the question, "Wouldn't it be easier to just give them a copy of the catalog?" Being a standard college catalog, ours meets all the expected academic criteria, but it does not answer some of the most common questions. People are interested in the practical aspects of career opportunities such as job availability, salary range, licensure, places of employment, and personality and physical requirements. The catalog's format and wording are a little too stilted from many students' perspectives.

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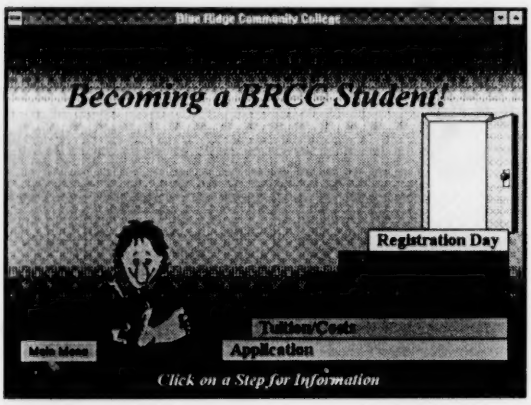
In presenting the faculty, we could have just listed their degrees, but we wanted prospective students to see them and realize that the faculty members are regular people. Elitism is counter productive in the community college arena. At Blue Ridge, we try to be approachable and have attempted to create a presentation method which reflects this goal.

Program Outline

In developing this program, we attempted to design a basic structure that we could use to present each curriculum. We wanted to be able to reach any screen of information with the fewest possible moves. We also wanted to have more information than can be easily fitted on a page. We used hotwords and object linking to accomplish this. The following outline indicates the structure we are using. Note that not all subtopics are appropriate for all curriculums. They are used only when applicable. Although we try to incorporate a common interface method for all curricula, we make adjustments, as necessary, to reflect the needs of each curriculum. The presentation needs for College Transfer are very different than for Electrical Installation and Maintenance, and each is served better by making slight modifications rather than making both fit into the same mold.

Admissions

- Application
- Tuition/Costs
- Financial Aid
- Placement Tests
- Counseling/Advising
- Registration Day



Curriculum

- Introduction
- Program Description
  - Goals
  - Class Times
  - Program Length
  - Degree Awarded
- Interests & Abilities
  - Working Conditions
  - Physical Requirements
  - Personality Requirements
  - Self Directed Search Code
- General Course Descriptions
  - Major Classes
  - Related Classes
- Job Opportunities
  - Job Outlook
  - Places of Employment
  - Salary Range
  - Additional Benefits
  - Licensure or Certification
  - Types of Jobs
- Faculty

Personnel

Involve the Faculty

After determining our format and developing a curriculum outline, we began writing our text. During the writing, we found that we did not understand all the information we were presenting. If we don't know what we're talking about, how are the prospective students supposed to understand it? We realized that the best resource for explaining this material was the faculty members of each curriculum. By working with the individual faculty members, we were able to get current and accurate information concerning each program. This also makes the faculty feel that others are interested in their programs. Most are proud of their curriculums and excited to see materials being developed to help present it.

Other Functions

In addition to the standard recruiting fare, this program may be used to present the curriculums to advisory committees or to make presentations to local civic organizations (such as ABWA). This program lends itself to presentations in a group setting using an overhead projector with an LCD projection panel. With this, we can show how current academic programs are structured and how current equipment is being utilized. This is also a good tool for the orientation of new employees.

Since seeing our program, Montgomery Community College in Troy, NC has started developing a similar application that will eventually lead to multimedia course packs.

At Blue Ridge Community College we are planning to use this program as the basis of an interactive kiosk system to be implemented in conjunction with the opening of a new campus building housing our Student and Administrative Services area in 1996.

Additional Benefits

When we began working on this project, we did not anticipate some of the benefits we encountered. We predicted that we would get better information about each curriculum, but did not foresee the amount of detail and the practicality of the information we uncovered.

We see this program as an annual check for keeping updated about each curriculum. At times, each of us encounters a communications breakdown, especially with the growth rate of many institutions. This should help the persons responsible for recruiting stay informed about current changes in each curriculum.

This is also a device that helps bridge the gap between faculty and Student Services. Many times, people in different departments forget that they are both working toward the same mission in the same institution.

Lastly, this program helps create a high-tech image for the institution. It's one thing to say you have technology, and quite a different issue to demonstrate it.

Problems You May Encounter

The biggest obstacle we have encountered in this project is time. To date, we estimate we have invested well over 200 man-hours. After completing the groundwork, things have progressed more rapidly. It takes a fraction of the time to develop a curriculum now that we have an idea of what we are trying to accomplish. Ironically, another "problem" is that we can't seem to find a stopping point. We keep asking, "Wouldn't it be nice if ...?" At the rate we're going, this project seems that it will be evolving continually.

At Blue Ridge, we are fortunate to have an excellent support structure. Our administration sees the potential value of this program and feels we are making a significant contribution to the school. In some institutions, persons from two different areas may have difficulty in crossing the imaginary boundaries that exist between divisions. Both of us are known for the fact that we regularly cross these artificial boundaries in our daily work. This makes the task easier. Other boundaries that must be overcome may exist between curriculums.

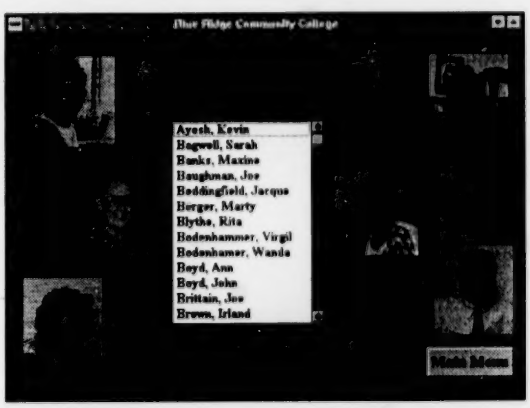
Other potential problems you may encounter include money for equipment and the technical expertise required to assemble this type of information system.

Other Possible Multimedia Approaches

The approach we have taken makes the assumption that a representative of the school is working with the prospective student. We have purposely omitted explicit instructions on navigating through the program, because we want to keep the personal contact with our prospective students. This program may easily be modified to work with a student information station or in an interactive kiosk setting.

One program we have seen is designed to send directly to the prospective student. By nature, the typical community college student lives within a relatively close proximity to the school. Other schools may wish to send a diskette to the prospective student, but this creates technical problems that include, but are not limited to the program size, the number of pictures that can be included, the picture resolution, the depth of information, hardware requirements of the student, etc.

Future Plans



The current focus of this program is on the curriculums offered at BRCC and the admissions procedures, however other areas and functions of the school may be developed in the future. We have already found that a natural outgrowth of this program is a personnel directory. We have already developed biographical information on the faculty, so the staff should not be too difficult to include. Our

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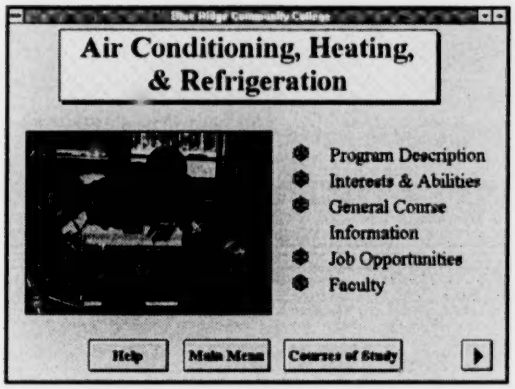
immediate expansion plans include developing a section to explain the various functions of the personnel in the Student Services area. We also see sections highlighting our Continuing Education Division, Educational Foundation, Small Business Center, Industry Training Partnerships, and the Blue Ridge Center for Lifelong Learning evolving, as time allows.

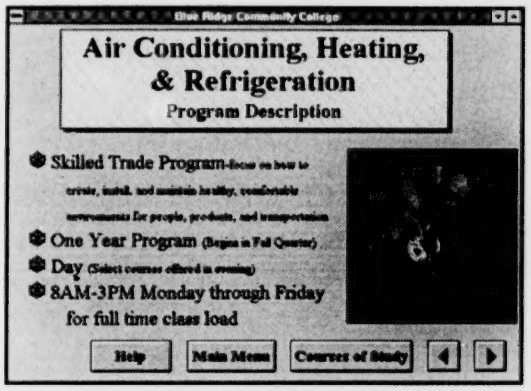
As these new sections are developed, other applications, like orientation class for students and foundation fundraising, will present themselves.

Screens for Air Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Curriculum

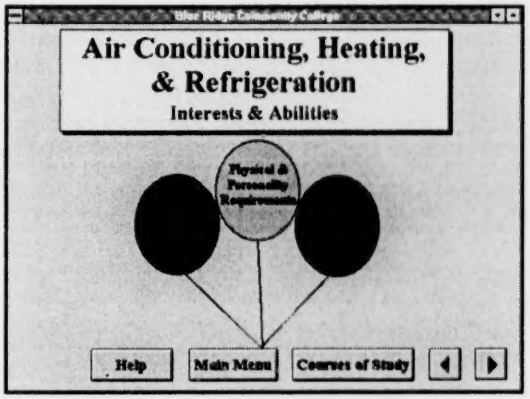
The following pages contain a sample of the format we have designed to present each of the curriculums offered at Blue Ridge Community College.



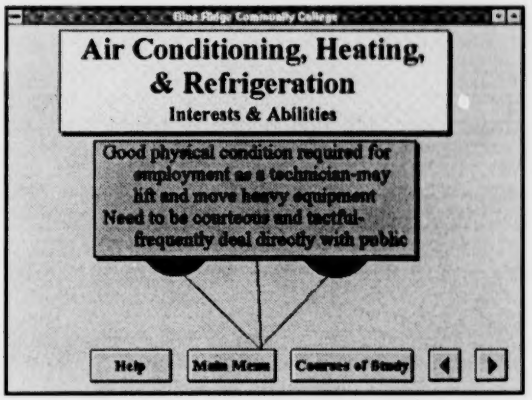
Opening screen outlines topics presented for each curriculum.



Program Description screen provides an overview of the curriculum.



Interests & Abilities screen allows access to information on unique characteristics and requirements for people considering this field.


Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration
Interests & Abilities
Good physical condition required for employment as a technician-may lift and move heavy equipment
Need to be courteous and tactful-frequently deal directly with public
Help
Main Menu
Courses of Study

Clicking on a balloon reveals specific information on the topic selected.

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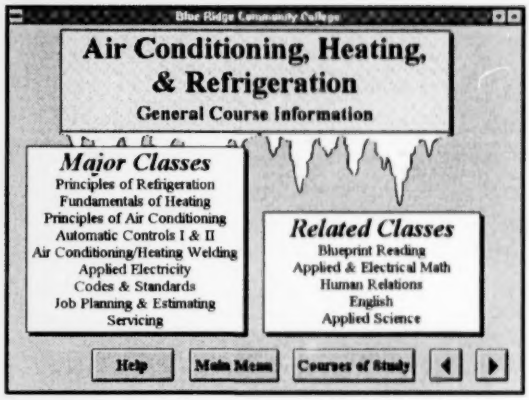
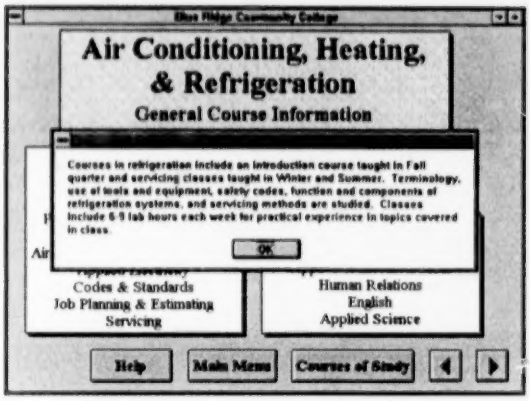


Courses are grouped by subject rather than showing individual course information.

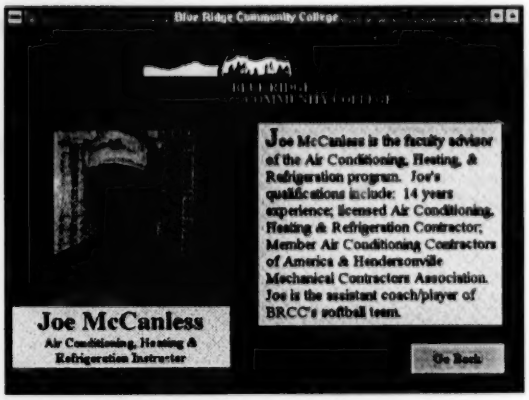

Blue Ridge Community College
Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration
General Course Information
Courses in refrigeration include an introduction course taught in Fall quarter and servicing classes taught in Winter and Summer. Terminology, use of tools and equipment, safety codes, function and components of refrigeration systems, and servicing methods are studied. Classes include 6-9 lab hours each week for practical experience in topics covered in class.
OK
Codes & Standards
Job Planning & Estimating
Servicing
Human Relations
English
Applied Science
Help
Main Menu
Courses of Study

Clicking on a course area reveals more detailed information on course content.

The topics on the Job Opportunities screen are selected to be appropriate for the curriculum.

Blue Ridge Community College
Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration
Job Opportunities
Air Conditioning Heating, Refrigeration Contractors; Service and Repair Shops; Fuel Oil Dealers; Utilities Companies; Federal Government Agencies; Hospitals, Office Buildings, and other organizations with large climate control units; Approximately 1 out of every 7 technicians is self-employed.
OK
Help
Main Menu
Courses of Study

Clicking on a star reveals information on the appropriate subject.


Blue Ridge Community College
Joe McCanless is the faculty advisor of the Air Conditioning, Heating, & Refrigeration program. Joe's qualifications include: 14 years experience; licensed Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Contractor; Member Air Conditioning Contractors of America & Hendersonville Mechanical Contractors Association. Joe is the assistant coach/player of BRCC's softball team.
Joe McCanless
Air Conditioning, Heating & Refrigeration Instructor
Go Back

Faculty information includes professional and personal information that the instructor would like to share.

Technical Specifications

In designing this program, we approached it asking "What will it take to accomplish our goals?" We wanted to present a professional appearance, so we chose to use a graphical user interface with a high quality display, 640 x 480 pixels with 256 color resolution. We also wanted to use a machine that would respond efficiently enough so that users would not become impatient while seeking information. Our program currently requires approximately 20mb of hard disk space (not including the software listed below). Portability of this system was also a consideration.

Commercial Software

- Asymetrix ToolBook 1.53—Primary development environment
- Microsoft Windows 3.1—required for ToolBook
- Microsoft Video for Windows 1.0—Full motion video capability
- DOS 5.0 or higher

Hardware—minimum requirements

- Computer
  - 486DX processor
  - 8mb RAM
  - 240mb hard disk
  - SVGA monitor
  - 1mb VRAM
- Video Spigot
- Cannon Xapshot Camera for still motion video photography
- nView Viewframe Spectra Overhead Projection Panel

For portability, we chose a Sager Midern laptop computer with 486DX processor, 8 mb RAM, 240 mb hard disk, and an active matrix color display.

Costs

Costs for implementing this program vary according to equipment already in place at your institution and utilization of personnel. A laptop capable of running this program effectively runs about $4,000. The cost for the Xapshot camera was approximately $400. The Video Spigot comes bundled with ToolBook and Video for Windows and is available for around $400. A good color projection panel runs about $5,000. As with most custom applications, the greatest cost is the labor required for program development.

Questions or Comments?

Please feel to contact us at the address listed above. We are glad to share information about the Multimedia Campus Tour, and we welcome input on how we can improve our program!

About the Presenters

Terry Robinson is an instructor of Computer Operations at Blue Ridge Community College. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Terry serves as consultant/resource for the campus's academic and administrative computing needs. He has also been employed by Brevard College, Philips & Dupont Optical Disc Corporation, and several consulting firms. Terry holds a B. S. from the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

Marcia Stoneman has been with Blue Ridge Community College for 14 years in the Student Services area. She has been involved with retention, testing, job placement, personal/academic/career counseling, admissions, recruiting, and public information functions. Marcia holds a B. S. in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a M. A. Ed. in Student Personnel Development from Western Carolina University.